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ABSTRACT

Quality Circle (QC) and Quality of Working Life (QWL) in the United States are similar in that both stress participative decision making, preserve management's prerogative to have the final say, and are voluntary. QC and QWL programs differ, however, in that labor unions are more involved in QWLs; QCs deal only with technical problems related to work while QWLs discuss the entire work environment; and QWLs incorporate representatives from all levels of the organization while QCs limit the circle to employees on the same level. An examination of QCs and labor relations in Japan reveals that labor relations there tend to be both more cooperative and more antagonistic than those in the West because of the presence of enterprise unions, labor-management collusion, traditional dispute settlement, and modern dispute settlement. In Japan, the QCs play an important role in furthering employee interest by offering an alternative to identifying solely with company or union interests and by providing the training needed for advancement. Unlike the QCs in Japan, those in the United States do not consider the needs of the employee participant, stressing instead technical problems. This fact explains why QCs in the United States are initially successful but ultimately fail. For these reasons, QWL programs may be better suited for the United States. (JL)

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E-Quality in the Workplace: Quality Circles or Quality of Working Life Programs in the US

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Abstract

One of the major themes of the Japanese Management Style is participative decision making. Quality Circle (QC) programs in the US are based on the Japanese model, but do not achieve their intent, whereas Quality of Working Life (QWL) programs are better able to increase participation in decision making. The spirit of the Japanese approach is more evident in QWL than QC programs in the US. Underlying the differences between the two programs in the US, are ethical differences in communication. From a critical interpretive standpoint, QWL programs serve an emancipatory interest, while QC programs serve a technical interest.

Definitions of QC and QWL Programs in the US

Quality Circle programs in the US consist of "groups of people who meet voluntarily to define, analyze and solve work-related problems. Typically, these people come from the same department or work group, or at least do similar work, so that the problems they discuss are familiar to all of them, and all of them can contribute to the development of solutions" (Baird, 1982: 7).

According to Brower (1982: 4), Quality of Working Life programs in the US consist of three components:

> [1] a philosophy of management that accepts the legitimacy of existing unions, that believes cooperative relationships with those unions are worth

developing, and believes that every employee has the ability and the right to offer intelligent and useful inputs into decisions at various levels of the organization;

[2] a process to involve employees at every level of the organization in decisions about their work and workplaces; [and]

[3] the intended outcomes of practicing this philosophy and process, with improvements in working conditions, environment, and practices, and in the general climate or culture of the workplace. This same process also brings organizational benefits of cost reduction and quality improvement and personal development benefits which are also integral parts of the QWL concept.

Similarities and Differences in the US

Similarities. The above definitions indicate three areas where QC and QWL programs are similar. First, each program emphasizes participative decision-making. Ironically, the history of each approach shows the influence of a US concern with democracy. The QC concept was introduced to Japan during the post-war years by two US citizens, Drs. W. Edward Deming and Joseph Duran in order to teach the Japanese methods in quality control. Participative decision-making was one basic principle that they taught. In a similar fashion, the QWL concept was introduced to European countries after World War II in an effort to democratize industrial relations. Again, the major thrust of this endeavor was to increase participation in decision-making throughout the organization (Ronchi, 1981).

Second, even though both QC and QWL programs stress participative decision-making, each program preserves

management's prerogative to have the final say on decisions. Using Likert's (1967) four types of organizational systems, the decision-making process of both QC and QWL programs seems more consultative than fully participative. Table 1 displays how QC and QWL programs may be categorized using Likert's four systems. Examining Table 1, it is apparent that QC programs are slightly less consultative, tending to be somewhat more benevolently authoritative than QWL programs. It should be stressed that the categorization of QC and QWL programs is solely theoretical, being based on the authors' interpretation of how QC and QWL programs operate.

Third, both QC and QWL are voluntary programs: members chose whether to join. This point, however, needs to be qualified for both QWL and QC programs. The City of Columbus QWL Program, for example, has both fixed and nonfixed (elected) positions. "'Fixed' means that there is always a seat on the committee for the person who occupies a certain role" such as plant manager or union steward (Chevallard, et al., 1979: 9). Hence, the QWL program in this case is voluntary in the sense that some members may choose to seek a seat on a committee (non-fixed), while even those people in roles that normally are represented on the committee (fixed) may choose not to participate. QC programs also must qualify the meaning of participation, since in some cases not all employees who wish to join a QC are allowed. Baird and Rittof (1983) note that this occurs especially when a program is just starting up. In these cases, they recommend that

employee members either be elected or randomly selected. Additionally, while QC programs encourage the participation of union stewards and supervisors in circle activities, their participation is totally voluntary.

Differences. The differences evident between both approaches determine the basis for the thesis of this paper. Probably the greatest differences between QC and QWL programs is in the involvement of labor unions. QC programs work under the premise that labor unions may be involved after management has already made a decision to implement the program (Baird and Hittof, 1983; Metz, 1981; Yager, 1981). On the other hand, QWL works on the premise that management collaborates with the union before a program is initiated (Ronchi, 1981; Rubinstein, 1980; Scobel, 1980; Chevallard et al., 1979). The difference here is that in QC's, unions can only decide whether or not to support a program after a decision has been made by management, whereas QWL's offer unions the unique opportunity to be an integral part of the program from the start.

A second difference between QWL and QC programs is found in the emphasis each places on productivity and the entire work environment. QC programs are limited in scope since the circle only deals with problems related to work (a technical interest) in a particular area of the organization. Baird (1983: 27) notes that:

> While the most successful Circles are granted a large degree of autonomy in selecting the problems they work on, they are also restricted from probing into areas

> which legitimately are outside their purview. Examples of such matters are: wages and salaries, interpersonal conflicts, grievances, and in general, anything which directly concerns a labor contract or which is in violation of laws or statutes.

QWL programs tend to be more expansive in focus, with the entire work environment being open for discussion by members. Scobel illustrates this point as follows:

> In a sense, today's QWL is testing the hypothesis that a more creative and productive workplace positively correlates with the opportunity for individual growth and fulfillment from the work life experience. Although "fulfillment" is illusive and individualistic in its definition, there are some generally fulfilling workplace characteristics that are beginning to emerge from experience. For some, it is the opportunity to have input into decisions that a person is expected to implement. For some it is a voice, however small, in the definition of a person's own job. For some it is a revision of policies and practices to reflect personal respect and trust. For some it is a lessening of the restrictions and regimentations of work life. For some it is creating cooperative rather than adversarial union-management relationships. For some it is being more openly and honestly informed. For some training and development specialists it is often the design of organizational processes that enables people to apply the results of their training, education, development and growth. (Scobel, 1980: 38)

Yager further supports this idea, noting that:

> The Circle movement is not a total effort in Organization Development. As mentioned, it was launched initially in Japan as a training effort. Many of the motivational and participative effects emerged as the process developed. Quality of Work Life, on the other hand, is much broader and is aimed specifically at a myriad of issues related to communicating, organization, job enrichment, incentives, working conditions, team building, attitudes and other human factors on the job. (Yager, 1981: 102)

Related to the preceding difference between QC and QWL programs, is the extent to which each program is integrated into all levels of the organization. QWL attempts to incorporate representatives from each level of the organization into the program. QC's, in contrast, limit the circle to employees at the same level, typically, immediate supervisors and their subordinates. Yager (1981: 102) discusses how this difference between the two types of programs center upon "participative management."

> The circle does not involve interdepartment efforts, "linking pins," representative forms of employee involvement or similar activity where employees participate at higher levels of management or in higher organizational decisions. (Carried to an extreme, these plans have even appointed line workers to the board of directors.)
>
> Circle activities involve effort only at the level of application of the worker. Decision powers are limited dramatically compared to those of other participative techniques. A circle project does not preclude these activities, however. Nearly every QWL effort (or OD effort) today uses, or at least considers, Quality Circles as <u>one</u> element of a total project.

Figure 1 illustrates the basic structural differences between QWL and QC programs. This illustration distinguishes, in part, the varying degree to which such programs are integrated into all levels of the organization. To gain a fuller grasp of the different ways in which this integration takes place, one must consider the membership of QC and QWL programs. Figure 2 illustrates those personnel who make up the membership of QC's. Figure 3 depicts the four typical levels in a QWL program and the members who participate at each level.

QC's in the US and Theory Z

The 1980's have seen a tremendous increase in the number of QC programs implemented in the US. Yet, as "recently as 1978, few American managers had even heard of the process" (Yager, 1981: 98). While the first QC program was initiated in the US in the early 1970's, by 1980 approximately 230 US companies had started up QC programs totaling about 3000 circles (Metz, 1980: 71). Certainly, part of the popularity of QC programs in the US (Anderson and Anderson, 1982) may be traced to the reasoning articulated by Ouchi (1981).

His Theory Z presents a view of Japanese organizations as achieving superior production by engendering trust, promoting intimacy, and practicing subtlety. Two means by which trust, intimacy, and subtlety between management and employees may be developed are training and participative decision-making. These means, according to Ouchi, are essential if QC programs are to work in the US.

> Perhaps the first message to the United States is that a firm can realize the full potential of its employees only if it both invests in their training and then shares with them the power to influence decisions. Without training, the invitation to participate in decision making will lead only to frustration and conflict. Without a sharing of decision-making power, an investment in training will be both frustrating and wasteful. (Ouchi, 1981: 268)

At first glance, Ouchi's comments seem merely to echo the humanistic management philosophy of the Human Relations and Human

Resource Schools. However, a closer reading of his work reveals perhaps the real source of Theory Z's popularity: management can be most effective by creating an organizational culture in which employees identify their self-interest with the organization's interests. And, this cultural transformation can only occur through change initiated from the top of the organization.

A recent criticism of Theory Z, however, suggests that Ouchi's interpretation of organizations and culture in Japan may be mistaken. Sullivan (1983) argues that Theory Z is based less on a humanitarian set of values than upon institutional values. The industrial clan envisioned by Durkheim as the remedy to bureaucracy is the keystone for Theory Z. Sullivan critiques Theory Z on both empirical and theoretical grounds. Empirically, there is only limited support for Ouchi's characterization of Japanese organizations as exercising power from "clan value-based influence." Rather, most Japanese firms utilize a "patron-like exercise of power and influence." Theoretically, Theory Z can be critiqued by noting a major contradiction inherent in the theory: Ouchi views consensus decision-making as an incentive in a causal chain leading to intimacy, trust, satisfaction, and productivity. Yet, consensus decision-making need not be an incentive. Indeed, it may be a result of minimally competent managers (sustained by the other incentives of Theory Z, e.g., life-time employment and non-specialization) needing to have consensus decision-making in order to maintain their hierachial status.

This suggests that an examination of QC's in Japan may clarify the meaning of participative decision-making. It may be that successful QC's in Japan are a source of empowerment for workers, rather than a means for organizations to reinforce "clan values," as Ouchi's work suggests.

QC's in Japan

American quality control experts (Deming and Juran) worked with the Occupation authorities in Japan to rebuild the Japanese economy after WW II. Deming introduced the techniques of statistical analysis for quality control, while Juran stressed the involvement of upper and middle management in quality control efforts.

> The Japanese studied their recommendations and put them into practice on a large scale basis from 1955 to 1960, with an important modification: instead of allowing quality control to remain the province of quality control engineers, management made it the responsibility of all rank and file employees as well. Blue-collar workers were taught quality control techniques and allowed to participate in quality control groups. . . .
>
> [T]his innovation to include blue collar participation implied a fundamental difference between the Japanese manager's belief in the perfectibility of man and the opposing ideas of American managers. For example, unlike Japan, where workers are granted the opportunity to redesign their work, in the United States many managers do not permit employees to inspect their own work. (Munchus, 1983: 255, 256)

Additionally, Cole (1980) notes that the success of QC's in Japan is partly due to the education of high school students in Japan. These students, recruited for the blue-collar labor force

during the labor shortages of the 1970's, have the mathematical and statistical skills needed for QC analysis. They also have a need for the worker responsibility critical to the success of QC's.

Munchus (1983) points out an additional factor influencing the growth of QC's in Japan:

> The UJSE, a nonpofit research and training institute, was organized in 1948 to involve foremen in the quality circle idea and to bring foremen together from different companies. UJSE was composed of engineering and science professors and industrial engineers. Its magazine, Genba to QC, later renamed FQCC, disseminated information to company foremen with case studies of circles already in operation. The involvement [of] foremen as representatives of the workers was considered crucial to the success of quality circles. Foremen generally received 30 to 40 hours of training.

The UJSE has also sponsored and arranged visits between circles from different companies, as well as hosting annual conventions attended by thousands of QC participants. As Yager (1981) notes QC's have become institutionalized through this governmental support, which includes, besides the UJSE, the Deming Prize (to companies with excellent quality control methods) and the observance of November as the National Quality Month.

The institutionalization of QC's in Japan suggests that QC's now play an important role in labor-management relations. In order to speculate upon just what that role may be, it is necessary to review the nature of labor-management relations in Japan.

Labor Relations in Japan

Okochi (1973) points out that three structures characterize Japanese industrial relations: lifetime employment, an age-grade reward system, and enterprise unions. He notes that:

> These three factors do not stand independently but are mutually related so as to constitute an integrated system. As we have seen, company level personnel practices, and indeed the economic and social basis for the formation of unions, are rooted in the custom of lifetime employment and an age-grade reward system, including wages. In its turn, the management system is strengthend and reinforced by the enterprise form of union organization and by the lifetime employment and special type of seniority systems. (Okochi, 1973: 497)

According to Hanami (1979), unions in Japan comprise approximately 35% of the labor force, with the majority (90 %) of unions being company-based. Thus, there are few trade and industrial unions in Japan and their membership is quite limited. Moreover, the Japanese enterprise unions are quite different from the US trade based unions. Because of these differences, which are highlighted below, Japanese labor relations are rather paradoxical to the Western observer: they tend to be both more cooperative and more antagonistic than those in the West.

Enterprise unions. Hanami (1979) discusses two factors which contribute to the prominence of enterprise unions in Japan. The first factor is that only the employees of a particular enterprise are qualified to be members of the company-based union. This organizing priniciple, as Hanami notes, is the exact opposite of the closed shop agreements in Western countries, in

which only union members whose union has entered into an agreement with an enterprise are allowed to work for the company. In Japan, a worker is required to be an employee before s/he can become a union member. His/her status as an employee is always the most important aspect in her/his working life, with the union being second.

Agreeing with Okochi, Hanami states that the second factor contributing to the prominence of enterprise unions is the lifetime employment system.

> The emergence of the enterprise unions after World War II and the continuing importance of their role in the industrial relations system, in which enterprise bargaining is a crucial element, has its economic basis in the lifetime employment system. Although the labor shortages of the 1960's increased labor mobility, the majority of the workers are mainly concerned with the working conditions in their own companies. Western workers continue to "grow" throughout their working lives because of their ability to change jobs and to acquire a variety of skills which, in turn, enhance their independence. But in Japan a worker's entire future, whether in the form of wage increases, promotions or retirement allowances, depends upon his length of service in the particular company where he happens to take a job after finishing secondary school or college. Thus, protecting the interests of the workers means first of all improving the prevailing working conditions in a particular enterprise; the enterprise union is the organization best suited for this. (Hanami, 1979: 95)

Labor-management collusion. Hanami (1979) notes that collective agreements made by labor and management in Japan are flexible and more abstract than those bargained for in Western societies. The lengthy written contracts specifying wages, hours of work, and workers' rights and obligataions seen in Western

contracts are only sketchedly reviewed in Japanese contracts. In contrast to the US and most other Western countries, Japanese contracts usually contain "a clause called the 'consultation in good faith' or 'amicable consideration' clause, usually written as follows: 'Should a disagreement arise, both parties will consult each other in good faith,' or 'Should a disagreement arise, the parties will settle it amicably by consultation'" (Hanami, 1979: 53).

Given that consultation in good faith is so essential to collective agreements in Japan, it is not surprising that industrial relations typically exist in a climate of collusion between labor and management. Hanami (1979: 54-56) explains that:

> In those enterprises where unions are recognized and agreements are concluded between union and employers, labor-management relations are fairly smooth. In these firms there exists a climate of collusion (<u>nareai</u>) between the employers and the union representing the majority of the employees. <u>Nareai</u> is another aspect of <u>amae</u> and has almost the same meaning, but <u>nareai</u> is a feeling of emotional intimacy between persons outside the kinship group, while <u>amae</u> is usually restricted to the kinship group or very close friends. Basically the relationship is one of patronage and dependence, though the unions frequently put on an outward show of radical militancy in their utterances and behavior. . . .
>
> In companies where the principle of collusion prevails, the expense in terms of both time and money is discounted, since management knows very well that union activities will benefit them in the long run, no matter how militantly the union boasts of its strength. Actually companies consider the extensive privileges granted to the unions as necessary expnditures for securing good labor relations in the firm. For the perceptive Western observer, the role of Japanese unions as a tool of management is not hard to discern.

Traditional Dispute Settlement. Traditionally the approach to disagreements between labor and management is not to confront and make the conflict public, but to keep it private and allow the person(s) in the superior position (management) to rectify the situation. Hanami describes this first step in labor disputes as follows.

> Disagreements and grievances are supposed to be solved "amicably" in a manner known as nashi-kuzushi, which sometimes means "step by step," but in this context, should be understood as settling the matter in a natural way without active efforts. Actually solving poblems by nashi-kuzushi is little more than softening their impact and postponing any substantive solution. Subordinates are not supposed to express disagreement or to state their grievances openly; they are expected to endure hardships in anticipation of the benevolent consideration by a superior.

If the dispute cannot be settled through the process of benevolent consideration (nashi-kuzushi), the next step in traditional dispute settlement is to settle matters through emotional understanding. At this point, the dispute becomes publicly acknowledged and the settlement relies on each party showing mutual respect. This process, also known as "letting the dispute flow to the water," demands mutual trust. If this demand is not met, Hanami points out that "disputes erupt and sometimes even become violent" (1979: 57-8).

A third means of settling dispute, if it has not been settled by this stage, is through conciliation or arbitration by a third party.

> Conciliation or arbitration usually takes the form of an attempt to "save the face" (kao o tateru) of this influential person and to "entrust" (azukeru) the

> dispute with him. He is not expected to settle the matter in accordance with reason or any universal standard. He does not necessarily make any clear-cut decisions about who is right or wrong, nor does he inquire into the respective rights of the parties. The objective of this procedure of conciliation and arbitration is to settle the dispute in such a way as to restore and to maintain the friendly personal relations within the small society involved. The Japanese phrase for this procedure, maruku osameru (to settle in a circle), means to settle things in a way that satisfies both parties equally.

Hanami also points out that conciliation is limited in this approach since the third party must be mutually respected by the parties in dispute. Often times in labor management disputes, this mediatior is difficult, if not impossible, to find. Thus, the result may be full fledged upheaval.

Modern dispute settlement. Bargaining by unions in Japan has quite a different structure from that which we are accustomed to in the US. The strike, which is the major bargaining lever for US trade unions, is not nearly as effective in Japan. This is largely due to the fact that the enterprise unions find it difficult to sustain a large-scale united front for any extensive period of time. Nevertheless, bargaining tactics in Japan are just as adversarial (if not more so) as those in the US. Hanami tells us that the Japanese view their labor relations as "strained and antagonistic," a point of view that is the opposite of those impressions formed by many visitors from the US.

> Westerners regard Japanese labor relations as highly effective while the Japanese look at relations between company management and employee associations (particularly unions) as strained and antagonistic. The high estimate of Japanese labor by Westeners is partly the result of a misunderstanding and perhaps

> ignorance of the reality of the Japanese situation. . . .
>
> It is not at all exceptional in Japanese labor relations for unions to level charges against management. Companies also punish union leaders by disciplinary measures or charge them with violence and other crimes. In fact, both parties often indulge in emotional confrontations. . . . In innumerable cases. . . collective bargaining takes the form of a mass meeting, where both sides harangue each other and often clash violently. Far from being exceptional, such harassment practices are daily occurrences. . . The fact that unions and management frequently indulge in mutual harassment indicates that while unions are not strong enough to confront management openly, at the same time, they are not so weak enough to be completely controlled by management. (Hanami, 1979: 236, 129-31)

Generally labor and management try to resolve disputes using traditional means. However, if relations become so strained that the tactics discussed above come into play, both the company and the union will often seek to resolve matters through Western-style adjudication. This legal process, nevertheless, has proven to be quite a slow and inefficient means for resolving most disputes given the characteristic means by which labor-management disputes are settled. It is not unusual for a union that wins a settlement with a company to no longer be a major voice for employees in that company. Also, often cases are settled out-of-court through concessions by either the company and/or the union.

There are three characteristics of modern labor-management disputes, according to Hanami (1979). First, due to the inherent weaknesses of the enterprise unions, labor disputes are often determined by a split in the union organization. So-called breakaway unions form and undermine the position of the parent

union, frequently with the overt support of management. Second, the nature of the dispute between labor and management is seldom over substantive issues, but is often the result of employees becoming frustrated with their personal relations with management. As Hanami (1979: 133) states, "Employees soon become frustrated at being told: 'The company's interest is your interest.'" Thirdly, it is also common for labor officials to arrange back-door agreements, which are substantially different from their positions at the bargaining table.

The phenomenon of breakaway unions points to a peculiar weakness of enterprise unions. This weakness is evident in the willingness of union members to secede from the parent union. This splinter union not only musters the support of management, but also receives the support of employees disenchanted by the parent union's militancy. Hanami (1979: 137) notes that employees identify as strongly with the company as they do with the union, and that the ambiguous nature of most labor disputes makes it easy for the management to induce employee support for their position through promises of favorable treatment.

Conclusion. Japanese labor-management relations are paradoxical, being both cooperative and antagonistic, because of the influence of traditional and modern (Western) approaches to dispute settlement. The Western approach, which relies on legal adjudication of disputes, has not been successful in Japan due to the traditional Japanese values of harmony, cooperation and

trust. These values contradict the very essence of the modern approach and, when violated, give rise to management efforts to subvert unions, as well as union efforts to harass management. As Hanami (1979: 237) states:

> The reality of Japanese industrial relations shows that the main difficulty and confusion comes from the incongruity between the modern industrial relations system, the traditional approach to dispute settlement, and the Japanese value system. It is ironic to note that the very advantages of the "Japanese way," such as the human and personal aspects of labor relations, the avoidance of clear-cut decisions, a preference for conciliation rather than adjudication and a better understanding of the continuity of labor relations are mostly based on traditional practices and values which we have been regarding as obstacles to modernization. Thus, Japan should become emancipated from her obsession of believing that a different approach to labor relations is not the sign of underdevelopment but rather is reflective of the real meaning and functions of industrial relations in a different social context.

The nature of Japanese labor relations implies that QC programs play an important role in furthering employee interest. These interests are integrated with those of management and labor through the inclusion of union stewards and supervisors in QC's. While the organization's technical interests certainly dominate QC activities, nevertheless the QC offers an alternative to identifying solely with the company and/or union interests. This is seen, in part, by the social function served by QC's. The annual QC convention is an institution which serves to recognize the efforts of employees outside of the context of the organization. Moreover, the training offered to QC participants offers them the opportunity to achieve higher level needs.

Impact of Japanese and US QC's on Employee Participation

The role of the QC in Japan and the US are similar in many respects. But, there is a significant difference in the major area of emphasis that the QC plays in each country. While both countries utilize the human dimension in a participatory approach, they differ in their intent. QC's in Japan integrate the human relation aspect along with the technical, with priority given to the concept of "people-building." Unlike the Japanese QC's, the US QC's are oriented towards the technical participative approach found in human resource management. Hanner and Organ (1978: 393) explain that the human relations approach is based on the argument:

> that if subordinates have the opportunity to contribute to the definition of group goals and strategies, they satisfy higher order needs for self-esteem and achievement. The need satisfaction leaves them more pliable and amenable to organizational influence, more committed to resultant group goals, and more motivated to perfom in a fashion to achieve those goals.

The human resource approach, in contrast,

> rests on the assumption that knowledge and expertise are distributed throughout workgroups and that decisions are best made by those closest to, or most conversant with, the particular problem addressed. Participation, then, because it represents decentralized decision making, leads to higher-quality and more informed decisions, which lead to better group performance, which may result in greater satisfaction (to the extent that rewards hinge on performance criteria). (Hanner and Organ, 1978: 393,4)

The implementation of QCs in the US has followed a human resource approach with little consideration for the needs of the

employee participant. In contrast, the QC's that are successful in Japan (Munchus, 1983 and Cole, 1980) take into consideration the needs of employees to grow and develop on the job. Likewise, the prior discussion of QWL programs in the US shows that QWL's take a human relations approach to employee participation in decision making.

This distinction between the different approaches to employee participation in decision making suggests why QC programs in the US may be initially successful but ultimately failures (Metz, 1981). Built, as these programs are, on the notion of solving social-technical problems (with emphasis on the technical), QC's are bound to reach the point of diminishing returns for technical innovations. Additionally, QC programs that further the organization's technical interest limit the ability of employees to truly participate in the social planning that is so crucial for the survivial of modern organizations. (The reader may wish to consider Figures 1-3 and the earlier arguments made about the differences between QC and QWL programs.) It is our contention that a QWL program better meets the social and technical interests of both labor and management.

Implications

Habermas (1971) explains that a technical interest is based on a technology of measurement and specialized training that allows for the investigation of objects and the generation of knowledge about those objects. Such knowledge takes the form of

explanation which allows man to control not only material nature but also humankind. Traditionally, technical knowledge is viewed as value-free: the consequences of the uses made of this knowledge are not the concern of the people generating the knowledge. Unfortunately, this stance allows people in authority (management) to dominate others (employees). As we have argued, QC's in the US serve the technical interest of the organization, making possible the domination of the employee participants who generate the technological knowledge.

In contrast to a technical interest, a hermeneutic (social interpretive) interest stresses human understanding. Human understanding, according to Habermas (1979), occurs when there is a dialogical communication that aims at consensus. This hermeneutic interest does not nullify, however, the possible domination of others via a technical interest, it simply makes the communicators aware of this domination. Critical theory (Habermas, 1971) proposes a dialectical hermeneutic which can serve an emancipatory interest. A dialectical hermeneutic mediates the technical and hermeneutic interests, informing the technical interest so as to avoid its use for purposes of domination. Needless to say, such communication requires an ethic that supports an open society (Apel, 1980). It is in this context that QWL programs may be more successful than QC programs in the US. The representation of both labor and management in the decision-making process in QWL programs provides a structure that may allow for a dialectical hermeneutic. But, this

structure alone is not sufficient if there is not a communicative ethic which values and pursues free and critical discussion in an open society.

ENDNOTES

1. Table 1 is derived from Likert's (1967: 20,21) comparative analysis of different management systems.

2. Figure 1 is drawn from Baird and Rittof (1983) and Chevallard et al. (1979) and presents a simplified and idealized structure for both programs.

3. Figure 2 is based on Baird and Rittof (1983); again, this illustration is simplified in order to typify the membership of QC's. Note that the dotted lines signify that a supervisor or union steward may be a member of a circle.

4. Figure 3 is based on distinctions made by Chevallard et al. (1979) and has been modified to idealize the membership of committees so that it may be applied to both private and public sector organizations.

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TABLE 1

Character of Decision-making Process of Different Management Systems[1]

Operating characteristics	*System of organization*			
	Authoritative			*Participative*
	Exploitive authoritative	*Benevolent authoritative*	*Consultative*	*Participative group*
Character of decision-making process				
a. At what level in organization are decisions formally made?	Bulk of decisions at top of organization	Policy at top, many decisions within prescribed framework made at lower levels QC	Broad policy and general decisions at top, more specific decisions at lower levels QWL	Decision making widely done throughout organization, although well integrated through linking process provided by overlapping groups
b. How adequate and accurate is the information available for decision making at the place where the decisions are made?	Partial and often inaccurate information only is available	Moderately adequate and accurate information available	Reasonably adequate and accurate information available QC/QWL	Relatively complete and accurate information available based both on measurements and efficient flow of information in organization
c. To what extent are decision makers aware of problems, particularly those at lower levels in the organization?	Often are unaware or only partially aware	Aware of some, unaware of others QC	Moderately aware of problems QWL	Generally quite well aware of problems
d. Extent to which technical and professional knowledge is used in decision making	Used only if possessed at higher levels	Much of what is available in higher and middle levels is used	Much of what is available in higher, middle, and lower levels is used QWL/QC	Most of what is available anywhere within the organization is used
e. Are decisions made at the best level in the organization so far as				
(1) Having available the most adequate and accurate information bearing on the decision?	Decisions usually made at levels appreciably higher than levels where most adequate and accurate information exists	Decisions often made at levels appreciably higher than levels where most adequate and accurate information exists QC	Some tendency for decisions to be made at higher levels than where most adequate and accurate information exists QWL	Overlapping groups and group decision processes tend to push decisions to point when information is most adequate or to pass the relevant information to the decision-making point
(2) The motivational consequences (i.e., does the decision-making process help to create the necessary motivations in those persons who have to carry out the decision?)	Decision making contributes little or nothing to the motivation to implement the decision, usually yields adverse motivation	Decision making contributes relatively little motivation	Some contribution by decision making to motivation to implement QC/QWL	Substantial contribution by decision-making processes to motivation to implement
f. Is decision making based on man-to-man or group pattern of operation? Does it encourage or discourage teamwork?	Man-to-man only discourages teamwork	Man-to-man almost entirely, discourages teamwork	Both man-to-man and group, partially encourages teamwork QC/QWL	Largely based on group pattern, encourages teamwork

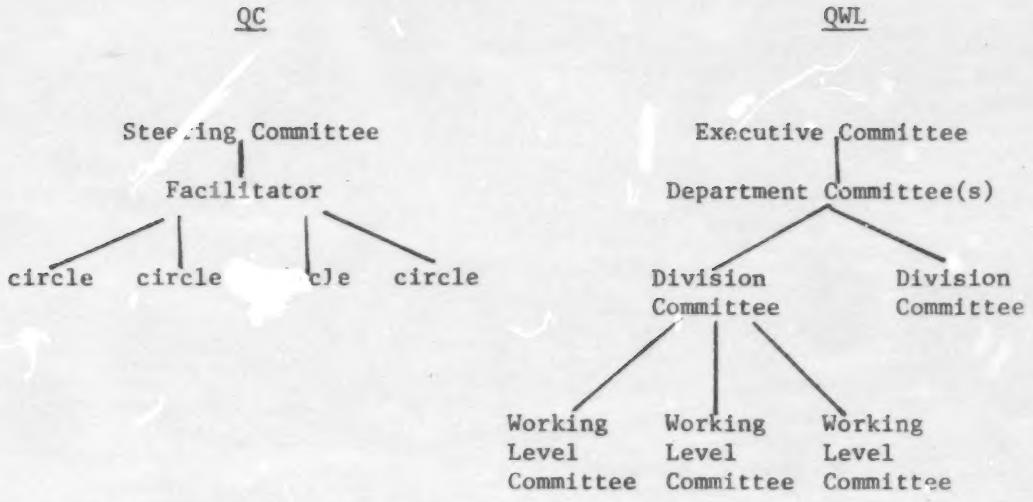

Figure 1. Comparison of QC and QWL Structures[2]

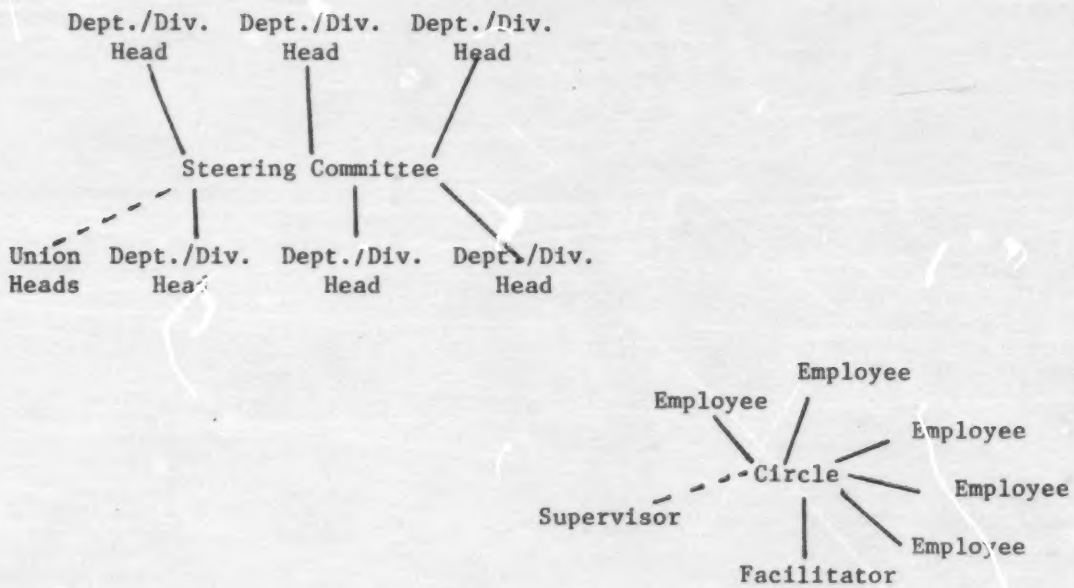

Figure 2. Membership of QC Committees/Circles[3]

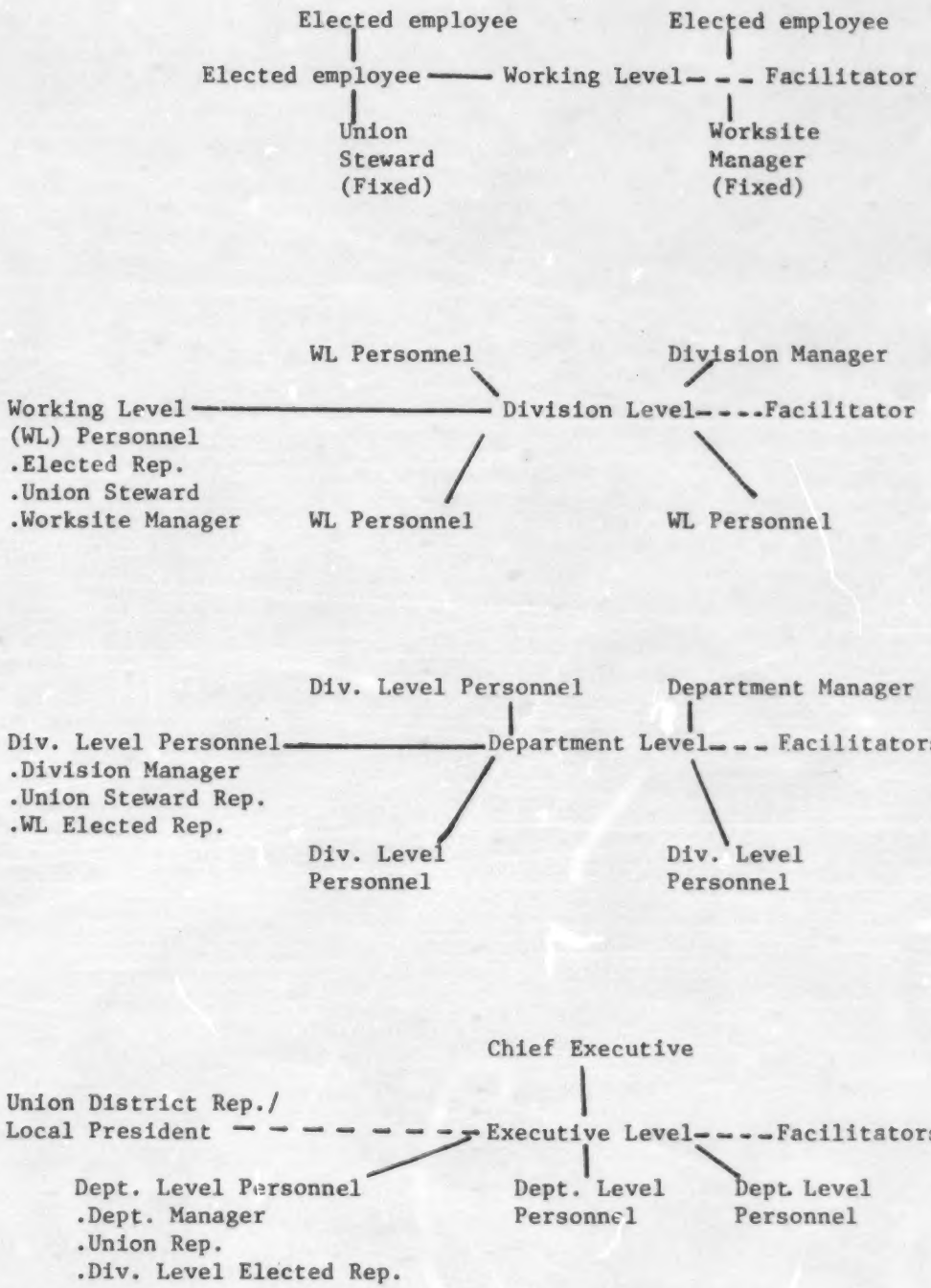

Figure 3. Membership of QWL Committees[4]